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Màster de Formació de Professorat d'Educació  
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Professional i Ensenyament d'Idiomes

## **Master Dissertation**

# **Resolving lexis- and grammar- related issues among peers during collaborative writing tasks**

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Exploring interactional resources and learning  
opportunities

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## **Abstract**

This study analyses, from a conversation analytic perspective, various sequences of interaction among three different groups of English as a Foreign Language students (between 15 and 18 years old) working on a collaborative writing task. The study's main aim is to explore which resources students employed to manage interaction and solve lexis and grammar-related problems they encountered while performing the task. Furthermore, this paper also focuses on determining whether collaborative writing tasks, and hence, peer-interaction, create opportunities for students to learn lexis and grammar. Results obtained could facilitate a further understanding for both foreign language teachers and other subjects' teachers regarding the use of collaborative activities in their classes; as well as the notion that students can be sources of information and knowledge to their peers.

**Key words:** English as a foreign language, conversation analysis, scaffolding, ZPD, collaborative writing tasks, peer interaction, lexis and grammar, interactional resources.

Este estudio analiza, a través de la técnica del análisis del discurso, varios episodios de interacción entre tres grupos de estudiantes (de entre 15 y 18 años) de inglés como lengua extranjera mientras realizaban una actividad de escritura en grupo. El objetivo principal de este estudio es descubrir que estrategias utilizaron los alumnos para gestionar la interacción y resolver los problemas de léxico y gramática que estos encontraron mientras llevaban a cabo la actividad. Además, el estudio también se centra en determinar si las actividades de escritura en grupo, y por lo tanto, las interacciones alumno/a-alumno/a, generan oportunidades de aprendizaje sobre léxico y gramática. Los resultados obtenidos podrían ayudar tanto a los profesores de lenguas extranjeras como a profesores de otras materias a entender que deben fomentar el trabajo en grupo en sus clases, y considerar a sus alumnos posibles fuentes de información y conocimiento para sus compañeros.



**Palabras clave:** Inglés como lengua extranjera, análisis del discurso, andamiaje, ZDP, actividades de escritura en grupo, interacción alumno/a-alumno/a, léxico y gramática, estrategias de interacción.

## **1. Introduction**

Foreign language classrooms have been using different methodologies over time, depending on how learners were believed to acquire language. More traditional approaches to foreign language learning suggested that in order to acquire a foreign language it was enough to attend classes and memorize the information the teacher provided you with, so as to apply it by your own later on. Therefore, foreign language classes used to be grammar-based classes where the teacher was considered to be the only source of knowledge and information.

In contrast, current trends in foreign language learning and teaching consider that in order to acquire a language it is necessary to engage in social interaction (Fernández Dobao, 2010; Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Li, 2013; Mondada & Pekarek, 2004; Pekarek, 2002; Reichert & Liebscher, 2012). Thus, foreign language classes are progressively changing their methodologies and shifting their focus of attention from the teacher to the students.

Vygotsky (trans. 1978) stated that through interaction learners were able to achieve more than they could by working individually. Vygotsky's tenets are reflected in the trends seen in the EFL context, since EFL classes have been promoting the use of collaborative or group work tasks and activities. These types of tasks and the talk-in interactions they generate are believed to create opportunities for students to learn from each other. Therefore, this approach to foreign language teaching and learning, as opposed to previous approaches, involves perceiving students as both receivers and providers of new information and knowledge.

This study aims at examining how peer-to-peer interaction to carry out collaborative tasks in the classroom can afford opportunities for students to learn from each other. Specifically, the study focuses on exploring the degree to which students working on collaborative tasks can help each other develop their linguistic competence (i.e. to learn new vocabulary and grammar-related issues).

To conduct this study, episodes of lexis and grammar-based interactions observed in the discourse of three different groups (4 – 6 students per group) of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students performing a collaborative writing task in a high school in the surroundings of Barcelona will be examined. These episodes will be approached from a conversation analytic perspective to: identify the different interactional resources students used to negotiate on lexis and grammar; and find evidence of lexis and grammar learning opportunities.

Therefore, this study will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. Which interactional resources do students use when solving problems related to lexis and grammar while carrying out collaborative writing tasks?
2. Do collaborative writing tasks create opportunities for students to develop their linguistic competence (i.e. lexis and grammar)?

By responding to these research questions, it is the author's hope that the evidence generated by the present study will contribute to a deeper understanding of how students in EFL contexts interact while performing collaborative tasks, and how they learn from each other. Moreover, findings from the data analysis may encourage foreign language teachers to: foster student-to-student interaction by implementing more collaborative tasks in their classes; and consider their students, and not only themselves, as sources of knowledge for the class.

## **2. The school**

The data collected in this study comprises videos that were recorded in a public high school in the surroundings of Barcelona. In this high school around 65 teachers offer Compulsory Secondary Education (*ESO*), and day and nighttime *Batxillerat* (Science and Technology, and Humanistic and Social Science) classes to a total number of over 600 students between 12 and 18 years old. In the high school there are: 4 lines of 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> years of *ESO*, 3 lines of 2<sup>nd</sup> year of *ESO*; and 8 lines of *Batxillerat* (4 daytime lines, and 4 nighttime lines). Most students

attending this high school come from working-class families, but some cases of families in unfavourable socio-economic situations can also be found.

It is a traditional high school in terms of methodology, because it is based on a more teacher-centred approach; although efforts to innovate are gradually being implemented by introducing new projects<sup>1</sup> in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> years of *ESO*. One of the positives features of the high school is that there are only 25 students, maximum, per class. Reducing the classes' ratio is a measure the high school takes to better respond to diversity.

It is also worth mentioning that, in this high school, for English lessons, *ESO* students (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> years of *ESO*) are divided in groups according to their English level (high, medium, or low). In English classes (*ESO* and *Batxillerat*) teachers usually follow the English book contents (i.e. grammar, vocabulary, reading, listening, etc.) and students work individually. However, at time, students are asked to perform individual or group work activities that are not on the books (e.g. oral presentations, recording videos, etc.).

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

#### **3.1. Social interaction**

About a decade ago, learning a second language was believed to be an individual process of internalizing and processing information (Pekarek, 2002). Nevertheless, theoretical trends in second language learning (SLA) have situated language development in social practices; in other words, it occurs when learners are engaged in social or talk-in interactions (Fernández Dobao, 2010; Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Li, 2013; Mondada & Pekarek, 2004; Pekarek, 2002; Reichert & Liebscher, 2012).

Humans have the ability to both learn and teach (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Therefore, in L2 classrooms, learners cannot only learn, but they can also serve as sources of information to their peers (Donato, 1994; Reichert & Liebscher, 2012).

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<sup>1</sup> Project-based teaching and learning

Learners themselves can influence each other's interlanguage system by providing support and guidance to each other (Donato, 1994). As a result, foreign language classrooms have promoted the use of pair and group work activities or tasks (Storch, 1999).

### **3.2. Scaffolding**

According to Devos (2016), social interaction leads learners to reach higher levels of learning that they could achieve on their own. This understanding goes back to Vygotsky (trans. 1978), who asserted that learning takes place when learners interact with an adult or a more capable peer, that is, “within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)” (Riechert & Liebscher, 2012, p. 599). Vygotsky described the ZPD as the metaphorical space between the level of performance a learner can achieve independently and the level of performance he or she can reach with an expert's assistance [i.e. an adult (e.g. a teacher), or a more knowledgeable peer] (Devos, 2016).

Support or aid that experts provide novices (i.e. learners) during the course of interaction is known as “scaffolding” (Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Devos, 2016). Scaffolding emerges when, in interaction, the novice or novices encounter problems and they allow the expert or experts to aid them in order to solve those (Devos, 2016). According to Devos, the problems that may arise in language learning contexts can be of two types: communicative problems (i.e. problems that hinder communication), or language-related problems (i.e. missing vocabulary, uncompleted sentences, etc.). Hence, during interaction in such situations, experts can: provide novices with oral support that will allow the talk-in interaction to continue, or solve the novice or novices' language-related questions.

#### ***3.2.1. Collective scaffolding***

When working in pairs or groups, learners interact to construct collective performance, meaning, and knowledge (Donato, 1994). Donato used the concepts of “collective scaffolding” or “scaffolded help” to refer to those episodes in which peer learners help each other during the course of interaction. By analysing several interaction sequences, Donato found that students used scaffolded help to:

increase interest in the task among group members; simplify the task (e.g. when one of the students in the group does not understand what they are asked to do); focus on the groups' goals (i.e. controlling interaction in order to achieve the group's main goal/s); control frustration episodes; provide their peers with a model, an example, or an ideal representation of what should be performed; and, highlight and correct relevant mistakes in their peers' performances [e.g. mistakes related to the target form (Danli, 2011)].

Collective scaffolding has been defined as the support or guidance an “expert” learner provides to a “novice” one (Donato, 1994; Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Li, 2013; Pekarek, 2002). Thus, it is assumed that during pair or group work there would always be a more knowledgeable agent who would guide and provide support to the less knowledgeable one. Nonetheless, it has been shown that these roles are not stable; they may mingle during the course of interaction, and hence, the scaffolded help is bidirectional; that is, each learner transfers his/her knowledge to the other/s (Donato, 1994; Pekarek, 2002). In addition, Danli (2011), Li (2013), and Fernández Dobao (2010) suggest learners should not be considered as more or less experts, since each student has his/her own strengths and weaknesses. Each member of the pair/group can contribute to the task by offering his/her own knowledge to the task and his or her peers. Consequently, all learners should be considered “individually novices and collectively experts” (Donato, 1994, p. 46). Thus, collective scaffolding creates opportunities for all members in the pair/group to develop their own and their peers' linguistic competence (Donato, 1994).

### **3.3. Conversation Analysis**

Determining the exact contribution that social interaction has on learning can be an arduous task (Mondada & Pekarek, 2004). Nevertheless, there exists an empirical approach that researchers have used to study talk-in interactions and the learning opportunities that may emerge within them. This approach, which is known as Conversation Analysis (CA), examines in depth “the naturally occurring conversations of participants during interaction” (Riechert & Liebscher, 2012, p. 115). Conversation Analysis aims at examining how participants in interaction

organize and respond to each other's turns at talk, and how they deal with the communicative problems (e.g. problems in understanding) they may temporarily halt the progressivity of interaction (Koschmann, 2013; Mondada & Pekarek, 2004; Seedhouse, 2004)

This paper examines its data from a CA perspective. Here CA is used as a lens to identify language learning opportunities that may arise in classroom peer-interaction, and the different resources participants use to jointly carry out group work tasks in an EFL setting.

### **3.4. Interactional Resources and Competences**

Taking part in group work tasks, and hence talk-in interaction, involves putting to use a wide range of interactional resources that may aid participation while interpreting, managing and co-constructing the task at hand. Danli (2011) analysed the way EFL students interact with each other while performing collaborative tasks and the resources they employ to do it. The results showed that learners used many different resources, not only to facilitate communication (e.g. checking comprehension, requesting clarification, using repetition, etc.), but also to construct collective scaffolding. By analysing different student-to-student interaction episodes, Danli found that learners interact to correct and give feedback to each other, or provide their peers with models or idealized version of what they should perform. Moreover, Danli could also observe how some students even assumed a teacher's identity to give their peers lessons on different form-related issues (e.g. issues related to grammar).

Danli's study and the present study share a common objective: to explore the different resources learners use during interaction. Thus, the results in Danli's study were of great relevance for the data analysis of this paper, since they provided some guidance to consider certain types of phenomena to observe in the data analysis.

Different studies analysing peer-interaction in problem-solving collaborative tasks concluded that the most important factor contributing to the tasks' success was participants' attitude towards the task and towards their peers (Fernández Dobao,

2010; Hellermann & Pekarek, 2010; Mondada & Pekarek, 2004; Pekarek, 2002). According to Mondada and Pekarek (2004) in order for students to be able to engage in team work, and hence, defend their positions, solicit help, or instruct their peers, they need to learn to interact efficiently to accomplish these activities. In other words, students need to develop certain socio culturally valued interactional competences (e.g. learn how to deal with communicative problems, how to open or close conversations, etc.). Therefore, as Pekarek states: “learning as a sociocommunicative activity inevitably involves also acting and learning to act socially” (Pekarek, 2002, p. 22). Moreover, Guerrero and Villamil (2000), and Fernández Dobao (2010) highlight the importance of creating an atmosphere of mutual respect where everyone is motivated to provide and receive feedback, share his/her own ideas, and listen to the others’ contributions:

Collaborative problem-solving activities were more likely to occur when all the learners adopted a collaborative orientation and were willing to share ideas and engage with each other’s contributions. (Fernández Dobao, 2010, p. 54)

### ***3.4.1. Use of the L1***

Apart from all the resources mentioned above (Section 3.4.), many studies have shown there is a recurrent resource students in foreign language learning contexts use when carrying out non-oral collaborative problem-solving tasks (e.g. writing tasks): their L1. Guerrero and Villamil (2000), Hellermann and Pekarek (2010), and Seedhouse (2004) found that students strategically and repeatedly used their L1 as a tool for negotiating tasks (i.e. maintaining the task’s control), giving support to each other, or making connections between their L1 and the L2 to solve language-related problems (e.g. talk about grammar issues). Furthermore, Hellermann and Pekarek (2010) observed how students seemed to feel more comfortable using their L1 to manage and accomplish the task by engaging in ironic humour, an activity they could not carry out if they were talking in their L2. Guerrero and Villamil (2000) have argued, that the use of the L1 should not be discouraged, especially in collaborative writing tasks, because the L1 is a tool students strategically use to manage interaction and collaboration:



Stifling the use of the L1 in collaborative writing tasks in the L2 classroom may not be a wise pedagogical practice because it discourages the employment of a critical psychological tool that is essential for collaboration. (Guerrero & Villamil, 2000, p. 64)

Initial observations of data collected for the present study revealed that participants repeatedly used their L1 over the course of interaction. Thus, this paper also seeks to analyse the use of the L1 as another resource participants employed to manage interaction. Previous studies analysing the use of the L1 in interaction to carry out language learning tasks, such as the ones mentioned above<sup>2</sup>, were relevant to further understanding regarding the L1 as a useful tool that students frequently and strategically use when carrying out collaborative problem-solving tasks.

### **3.5. Collaborative writing tasks and Language-related episodes (LRE)**

As reported by Storch (2012), writing collaboratively is a process that includes: generating ideas, discussing the text's structure, and editing and revising the text. In order for a writing activity to be considered collaborative, all the members of the group should work together during the whole writing process, that is, during the four phases mentioned above. According to Storch, if any group member engages only in some of the phases of the writing process, it cannot be considered a collaborative writing activity/task.

Collaborative writing tasks are thought to be tasks that foster students' reflexive thinking, as students need to explain and defend their ideas to their peers (Li, 2013). In addition, these tasks are thought to lead students to: draw attention to grammatical accuracy; and, discuss the language-related problems they may encounter (Fernández Dobao, 2010; Storch, 1999; Swain & Lapkin, 2001).

Collaborative tasks or activities, especially writing tasks, generate meta-talk (Danli, 2011; Fernández Dobao, 2010). Episodes in which students appear to negotiate form are known as language-related episodes (LRE). Swain and Lapkin (2001) defined language-related episodes as: "any part of the dialogue where

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<sup>2</sup>Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Hellermann&Pekarek, 2010; Seedhouse, 2004

students talk about language they are producing, question their language use, or other- or self- correct their language production” (Swain & Lapkin, 2001, p. 104). Language-related episodes can be both lexis-based (i.e. searching for vocabulary or choosing among vocabulary items) or form-based (i.e. morphology, syntax, etc.) (Swain & Lapkin, 2001).

During collaborative tasks learners interact to co-construct language knowledge and provide feedback on each other’s’ performances (Danli, 2011; Fernández Dobao, 2010; Storch, 1999). Therefore, as stated by Danli, these episodes of peer-scaffolding on language forms may help students develop their linguistic competence (e.g. grammatical accuracy and new lexical knowledge). Storch, for instance, compared the impact that writing in pairs/group or writing individually had on overall grammatical accuracy. Results suggested that the meta-talk generated in pair or group interactions “led to an improvement in the grammatical accuracy of the texts produced” (Storch, 1999, p. 370). Moreover, Storch asserted that “when working collaboratively students seemed more motivated to focus on grammatical accuracy” (Storch, 1999, p. 370).

The present study draws from the findings reported by Danli (2011) and Storch (1999) regarding how meta-talk generated during collaborative tasks may lead students to develop their linguistic competence (i.e. lexis and grammar) and to improve their productions, in terms of language. This thesis also explores how linguistic competence is constructed in language-related episodes in a collaborative writing task within an EFL setting.

#### **4. Methodological Approach**

In order to conduct this study, different episodes of student-to-student interactions during which the participants focused on lexis (9 excerpts) and grammar-based problems (5 excerpts) will be examined. These episodes were extracted from three video and audio-recorded group-work sequences (23:07’; 17:35’; and 23:29’) taking place in two different EFL classrooms (i.e. two different groups-classes). The videos were recorded in March of 2018.

## 4.1. Participants

Participants in this study are students (between the ages of 15 and 18 years old) in their 4<sup>th</sup> year of *ESO* (2 groups<sup>3</sup>) or 1<sup>st</sup> year of *Batxillerat* (1 group<sup>4</sup>), who are Spanish-Catalan native speakers learning English as their L3 or L4. Students were taking EFL classes in a public high school<sup>5</sup> in the surrounding of Barcelona, the research setting. Of special note, the 4<sup>th</sup> year *ESO* participants belonged to the highest English level group in their cohort. Thus, these students and those of 1<sup>st</sup> year of *Batxillerat* had similar English proficiency levels. Apart from taking English classes in the high school, most of 4<sup>th</sup> year *ESO* participants attended or had attended English extracurricular classes before<sup>6</sup>, which might account for their higher level of proficiency. Because of their similar levels of proficiency, both 4<sup>th</sup> year *ESO* (high level group) and 1<sup>st</sup> year *Batxillerat* students engaged in the same contents and activities/tasks in class (e.g. the task they performed for this study).

The participants were grouped (4-6 students per group) randomly using an online app with the aim of forming more heterogeneous groups in class<sup>7</sup>. In terms of proficiency levels; the result was that the groups formed included students with varying proficiency levels. Nevertheless, whereas 4<sup>th</sup> year *ESO* groups comprised both female and male members, the 1<sup>st</sup> year *Batxillerat* group consisted of male members only.

## 4.2. Task

Participants were asked to perform a collaborative writing task: they had to write a short screenplay<sup>8</sup>. Once they had written their plays, they were instructed to record themselves performing them. These plays were set in different periods of British history (e.g. Henry VIII, Victorian Era, Industrial revolution, etc.), and they all shared a common character: a nun. Each group of students was assigned

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<sup>3</sup>4<sup>th</sup> year *ESO* Group 1: Maya, Lisa, Melisa, Rob, and Christina.

<sup>4</sup>4<sup>th</sup> year *ESO* Group 2: David, Karl, Eva, and Anna.

<sup>4</sup>1<sup>st</sup> year *Batxillerat* group: Isaac, Tom, Hector, Victor, Aaron, and Derek.

<sup>5</sup> See section 2 for more information about the high school.

<sup>6</sup>It is an information students revealed in class.

<sup>7</sup> Instant classroom: <http://www.superteachertools.us/instantclassroom/#.WvN2YYgvzIU>

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix 1 to read one of the short screenplays students wrote (1<sup>st</sup> year *Batxillerat* group)

the historical era in which they had to set their plays using an online fortune wheel<sup>9</sup>. Previous to this written task students had been reading in class a play in which a nun appeared, which is why they were asked to use this same character in their plays. Moreover, before starting to write their plays, students devoted two or three sessions to carry out different activities (e.g. jigsaw video, mindmaps, short oral presentations, Kahoot quiz, etc.) in order to learn about the different periods in British history. The students were encouraged to incorporate what they had learnt in class into their plays. Thus, based on what they had learnt in class about the historical period they were assigned and the character of the nun, students completed collaborative tasks in which they: created new characters, developed a plot, and finally, wrote a dialogue. The data analysed for the present study show students interacting to write their dialogue.

#### **4.3. Data collection**

Videos were recorded in two different rooms. First year *Batxillerat* students performed the task in their own room (i.e. one of the high school's 1<sup>st</sup> year *Batxillerat* rooms). Fourth year *ESO* students performed the task in the school's library, the place where their English classes were usually held.

All videos were recorded using two different mobile phones (i.e. one mobile phone per group), which were provided by the teachers. The recording devices were placed on one of the corners of the tables where the participants were working. Also, some books or cardboard boxes were used to support the phones.

In order to record these videos, a formal document was directed to the participants' English teacher and the high school's secretary asking for approval. The high school's name and the names of its students have been anonymized.

#### **4.4. Data Analysis process**

Once data was collected, it was thoroughly screened and analysed. Only those sequences from the videos in which students negotiated solutions to problems

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<sup>9</sup>Wheel decide: <http://wheeldecide.com/>

related to lexis or grammar were selected to be analysed: a total number of 9 lexis-based and 5 grammar-based problem-solving sequences. These stretches of interaction were transcribed following the Jeffersonian Transcript Notation Conventions (See appendix 2).

Transcripts were approached from a conversation analytic perspective in order to explore the interactional resources students used to negotiate solutions to problems they identified related to lexis and grammar. For the analysis (section 5), transcripts were organized depending on the interactional resources participants were seen to use during the social activity of focus.

## **5. Data Analysis**

The following two sections (5.1. and 5.2.) offer an analysis of various sequences in which participants interact to collaboratively solve both lexis (section 5.1.) and grammar-related problems (section 5.2.) they encountered while writing their screenplays. This analysis will focus on the interactional resources students use to collaboratively overcome those problems, in order to find evidence of lexis and grammar learning opportunities. Therefore, this in depth analysis will seek to address the two main research questions this paper has set out to answer.

### **5.1. Lexis**

In this first excerpt (excerpt 1) Maya, Lisa, Rob, Christina, and Melisa are writing their screenplay's dialogue down already. Maya and Lisa orally interact to decide what they are going to write, but Maya is the only one writing the dialogue down in a paper. The rest of members in the group are engaged in off-task interaction<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Omitted lines

### *Excerpt 1*

---

1	MAY	<u>But. the nun.</u> was very <u>shy</u> ? ((reading while writing))  (5 lines omitted)
2	MAY	So (.) <u>she</u> (.) ((writing))  (1 line omitted)
3	MAY	<i>cómo es esconderse</i> ? ((looking at LIS)) how do you say “to hide”?
4	LIS	eh (.) eh (.) <u>hide.</u>
5	MAY	((looking at LIS and frowning))
6	LIS	hide.
7	MAY	((writing the verb down))

---

At the beginning of the excerpt (Line 1), Maya can be seen reading aloud what she is writing on the paper. In line 3, she indicates that she does not remember how to say a word in English (*esconderse*).

After a short pause (Line 2), she asks in her L1 “how do you say “*esconderse*” in English?” (Line 3). The recipient of this question is clearly Lisa, as Maya moves her gaze from the paper to her classmate (i.e. to Lisa) when she asks it (Line 3). Maya then asks Lisa for help by producing a request for information and looking at her. Lisa seems to contemplate the answer for four seconds, which is indicated by her thinking expressions and the pause she makes (Line 4), and eventually provides Maya with the word she was looking for (hide). Initially Maya does not seem to understand the word that Lisa uttered, because she looks at her and frowns (Line 5). Lisa understands from Maya’s facial expression that she did not understand, and hence, she repeats the word again (Line 6). Finally, Maya seems to have understood and agreed with the answer her classmate had provided her with, since although Maya does not express agreement verbally, she writes the verb down (Line 7).

Excerpt 1 shows a resource students may use when encountering a lexical problem: directing a request for information to their peers [e.g. “how do you say

(word) in English?]. This pattern is repeated in some of the following excerpts. In addition, this excerpt also illustrates how participants can use facial expressions to index that they did not understand or need for clarification (e.g. Maya frowning in Line 5).

In contrast, the following excerpt (excerpt 2<sup>11</sup>) demonstrates that, when working in groups, students also package information requests in ways other than full interrogative-formulations. In excerpt 2, it is Lisa, this time, who asks her peers for help, because she does not know how to say a word in English (*invitado*).

### *Excerpt 2*

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1	LIS	<i>mm</i> (.) <i>có:mo:?</i> <i>ho:w?</i>
2	LIS	I'm a (.) <i>invitado</i> . (.) <u>guest</u> . (.)
3	LIS	I'm [a::?
4	MEL	I'm a <i>invitado</i> .] <u>guest</u> .
5	MAY	I'm a: I'm ahost.
6	LIS	[a <i>invitado</i> .
7	MAY	I'm a host.]
		(6lines omitted <sup>12</sup> )
8	LIS	are you a foreigner?
9	MAY	you are a foreigner.

---

In line 1, Lisa initiates a request for information regarding the translation of a word (how?), but she does not finish the question. Lisa then says the sentence she wants to use in English, but says the word she does not know in Spanish (*invitado*) instead (Line 2). Lisa seems to use her L1 here to help her peers

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<sup>11</sup> This sequence could not be video-taped; it was audio-taped only, that is why the transcript does not include non-verbal activities.

<sup>12</sup> Christina and Melisa are engaged in off-task interaction

identify the word she does not know, or the source of trouble she would like to resolve.

After a short pause, Lisa repeats the beginning of her sentence again, using a rising intonation this time, and lengthening the vowel sound in “a” (Line 3). This raise of intonation and the lengthening of the vowel sound are the resources Lisa uses to recruit her peers’ help. Both Melisa and Maya align with Lisa’s request for help. Melisa repeats the same sentence Lisa said in her previous turn (Line 2), using the Spanish word “*invitado*” again (Line 4). This shows Melisa may not know how to say the word in English either. In Line 7, Maya proposes a candidate answer, by repeating the first part of Lisa’s sentence (I’m a) and replacing the trouble word with the word “host”. Lisa does not take up Maya’s proposed translation and continues contemplating aloud how to say “*invitado*” in English (Line 6). She even suggests using an approximation<sup>13</sup> of the word “*invitado*” (*invitaded*). While Maya, Melisa, and Lisa are searching for the word they want to use, Christina and Rob are joking (i.e. engaged in off-task interaction), and hence, the task at hand is interrupted over several lines. Once Christina and Rob stop talking, Maya, Melisa, and Lisa continue with their word-search. At the end of the excerpt, it can be seen that Lisa proposes using a different word with a similar meaning (foreigner) (Line 8). Maya seems to accept her peer’s suggestion, as she repeats the same sentence Lisa has uttered but this time with a downward intonation (Line 9).

Excerpt 2 shows how students do not always recruit help in a direct way by using an interrogative structure to formulate requests for information. They also use some other resources, such as raising their intonation or lengthening the vowel sounds, in order to invite their peer to help them. Moreover, as it could be observed in this excerpt, students also use their L1 as a tool that enables them to make themselves understood.

In the following excerpt (excerpt 3), which shows the interaction of a different group working together (David, Karl, Eva, and Anna), it is David who initiates the

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<sup>13</sup>An invented word that sounds like an L2 word.



word-search interaction. Here, David requests information in a slightly different way: using non-verbal communication.

### Excerpt 3

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1	DAV	<i>mm she::?</i> ((knocking on the table))
2	DAV	<i>cómo era?</i> [pi::?= ((Looking at ANN)) how was it said?[pi::?=
3	KAR	=she <u>knocks</u> ] the door. ((knocking on the table))
4	ANN	=she knocks] the door.
5	DAV	((nodding)) °she knows the door°
6	ANN	((writing the sentence down in the paper))

---

In the beginning of the excerpt (Line 1) David is trying to construct a sentence (“she knocks on the door”), but he does not seem to know the verb “knock”. David knocks on the table (Line 1) (See Figure 1) and immediately afterwards he deploys an information request (*cómo era?*) (Line 2) while looking at Anna. David starts to utter a word (pi::), but his peers interrupt him before he finishes it (Line 2).

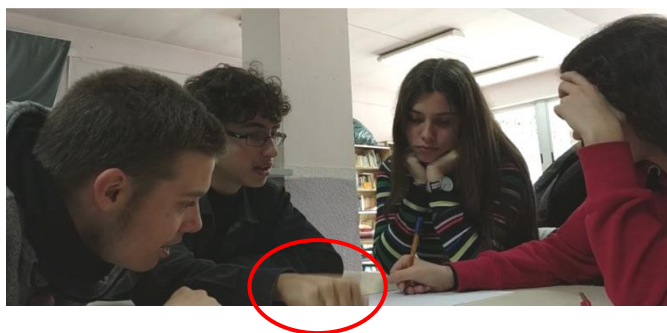


Figure 1. David requests information using non-verbal communication.  
From right to left: Anna, Eva, David, and Karl.

Both Karl and Anna comply to their peer’s call for help at the same time. They both utter the complete sentence David was trying to formulate at the beginning of the excerpt, providing him with the verb he was looking for (knock) (Lines 3 and 4). Karl not only articulates this sentence, but he also repeats David’s gesture while saying it (i.e. knocking on the table) (Line 3). Though David does not use

the precise word that his peers have supplied (Line 5), David seems to accept their contributions as indicated by the nodding of his head and his repetition of their sentence. Anna writes on their paper, which seems to signal a collective acceptance of the jointly constructed sentence as the participants end their search for the word in question.

The following excerpt (excerpt 4) was taken from a sequence where 1<sup>st</sup> year *Batxillerat* participants (Isaac, Hector, Tom, Aaron, Derek, and Victor) are working on their screenplay. In this excerpt another example of students using non-verbal communication as a resource to recruit help or make themselves understood can be found.

#### ***Excerpt 4***

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1	ISA	Inspector Jarbert eh (.) eh (.) e::h (.) have arrived.have arrived. (.) to the:: to the:: <u>factory</u> . (.) °and he is.(.) he is.°(.)
2	ISA	<i>entrar cómo es?</i> ((looking at HEC)) how do you say “go in”?
3	HEC	<i>qué quieres decir?</i> what do you want to mean?
4	ISA	Inspector Jabert <u>has arrived</u> to the factory and now he is? ((doing gestures with the hands to mean go in; looking at HEC)) (.)  (2 omitted lines <sup>14</sup> )
5	HEC	enters. (.) <i>bueno</i> (.) <i>o</i> goes in. (0.2) goes in <i>mejor</i> . well (.) or [...]better.
6	ISA	((writing the sentence down))

---

In line 1, Isaac is constructing a sentence aloud, but he cannot continue it because he does not know how to say the verb “*entrar*” in English (Line 1). Isaac looks at Hector and he asks him: how do you say “*entrar*” in English? (Line 2) The request for information that Isaac uses shows that he is orienting towards Hector as the

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<sup>14</sup>Aaron asks Hector about the sentence he has to write.

expert. He displays a stance that Hector has a higher level of knowledge regarding this issue. Hector answers him with another information request (*qué quieres decir?*) to clarify what information Isaac needs (Line 3). Specifically, Hector seems to elicit information about the context in which Isaac intends to use the word “*entrar*”. This interpretation of Hector’s action is verified in line 4, when Isaac looks at Hector and repeats the sentence again, this time omitting the verb “*entrar*” but providing him with the sentence in which he wishes to use this word. Instead of saying the verb, Isaac represents it by using hand gestures (See Figure 2).



Figure 2. Isaac requests information using non-verbal communication.  
From right to left: Derek, Isaac, Tom, Hector, Victor, and Aaron.

At the end of the excerpt, Hector provides Isaac with two possible ways of expressing the action he wanted to use (i.e. “enter” or “go in”) (Line 5). Hector asserts it is better to use his second candidate word (i.e. “go in”), though he does not explain to Isaac why it is better to use that one and not the other. By not only responding to Isaac’s request for information, but also offering more than one candidate translation, and also assessing the use of the second one more positively, Hector displays a higher level of linguistic knowledge, and seemingly assumes the expert identity, which Isaac was seen to attribute to him. Finally, in line 6, Isaac seems to accept Hector’s contribution as he writes the sentence down.

Other sequences were found that showed students’ focusing on lexis-based problems that they tried to resolve by explaining the meaning of words. This is the case in the following two excerpts (excerpts 5 and 6). Excerpt 5, involves Anna, Karl, David, and Eva working on their screenplay. In this sequence, students are searching for the corresponding English word to the Spanish word “*valentía*”.

### *Excerpt 5*

---

1	ANN	you had shown ((writing))
2	KAR	you had shown (.) <u>your value</u> .=
3	DAV	((looking at ANN))
4	ANN	=you:r (.) [you:r?
5	KAR	your value]
6	DAV	((looking at ANN))
7	ANN	((looking at DAV)) <u>bravery</u> <i>es valentía</i> . means bravery
8	DAV	°vale°. ((nodding)) °ok°.
9	ANN	your bra (.)ve (.) ry ((reading while writing))
10	KAR	bravery (.) <i>me encanta</i> .((smiling)) I love it.

---

Excerpt 5 begins with Anna uttering a sentence while writing it down (Line 1). Then, Karl repeats his peer's sentence and completes it with a complement (your value, Line 2). David does not respond verbally to Karl, but he looks at Anna (Line 3). By gazing at Anna, David may be showing his disaffiliation towards his peer's suggestion and asking her to suggest something different. In line 4, it can be seen that Anna interprets David's expression as a rejection to Karl's proposal, because she tries to suggest using a different word. However, Anna does not offer an alternative word to use, and she keeps searching for another word. This is indicated by the repetition and the elongation of the word "your", the pauses Anna makes after the first time she says "your", and her rising intonation when pronouncing "your" for the second time. In line 5, Karl suggests using the term "value" again. David and Anna immediately look at each other. Anna then proposes using "bravery", and after a short pause, she adds: "*es valientía*" (Line 7). By translating her word into their L1, Anna appears to be explaining to her peers why her candidate word is the one they should take up.

Finally, both David and Karl agree with Anna in using “bravery”. David nods and uses an agreement token, “*vale*”, to express acceptance of the word in Spanish (Line 8). As Anna sees that her peers have accepted the use of the word she proposed, she writes it down while she reads it aloud (Line 9). Despite having proposed another word previously, Karl also seems to agree with his peer, because he repeats the word “bravery” and claims he loves the word Anna proposed to use (Line 10).

The following excerpt, excerpt 6, shows the interaction of Maya, Melisa, Rob, Christina, and Lisa, working together. Here Maya, Melisa, and Lisa are searching for a time-expression to use in their text.

***Excerpt 6***

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1	MAY	suddenly.
2	LIS	<i>no.</i> <i>no.</i>
3	MEL	<i>no</i> (.) [ <i>porque:</i> <i>no</i> (.) [ <i>because:</i>
4	MAY	<i>cómo se dice?</i> ] (.) <i>en inglés?</i> how do say it ] (.) in English?
5	LIS	suddenly <i>es como en el momento</i> (.) <i>sabes?</i> (.) <i>no es</i> ah ah (.) <i>es como</i> °eh eh°. suddenly means at the moment (.) <i>right?</i> (.) it is not like ah ah (.) it is like °eh eh°.
6	MAY	after a while? (0.6)
7	LIS	<i>pero no:</i> but no:
8	MAY	after a while.

---

In Excerpt 6<sup>15</sup>, Maya suggests using the word “suddenly” in their dialogue (Line 1). Lisa and Melisa immediately display disaffiliation with their peer’s suggestion by means of a negative token, “no”, to show their rejection of Maya’s proposed

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<sup>15</sup>This sequence could not be video-taped; it was audio-taped only, that is why the transcript does not include non-verbal activities.

addition (Lines 2 and 3). Melisa begins to explain to Maya why “*suddenly*” is not appropriate (*porque*:) (Line 3), but Maya interrupts her by asking Melisa and Lisa how she can express what she wanted to express (i.e. after a while) (*cómo se dice en inglés?* Line 4). In line 5, Lisa attempts to explain the meaning of the word “suddenly” in Spanish, and seemingly begins to give an account for why “suddenly” is not the appropriate word, as she says that the word, is “not like”, presumably, the use that Maya had intended for it.

In this excerpt we observe Lisa also using her L1 to try to explain a word’s meaning (Line 5). However, the continuers she uses (i.e. *ah* and *eh*) and the pauses she makes indicate a level of uncertainty regarding how to achieve her explaining activity. In line 6, Maya suggests using a different expression (after a while). Maya formulates the new candidate expression raising her intonation, which shows she is asking for her peers’ approval of this new expression. After a long pause, Lisa makes her disagreement with the new candidate expression visible by using a contrastive conjunction, “but”, and a negative token, “no” (Line 7). Nonetheless, Maya finally indexes her intention to use it, by repeating the phrase with a downward intonation, despite the fact that Lisa does not seem to agree with her (Line 8).

Excerpt 5 and 6 show how participants make use of their L1 in attempts to explain to their peers the meaning of some words. Translating the words or trying to explain their meanings in Spanish enabled participants to provide explanations they most likely could not have been able to do using their L3/L4<sup>16</sup>.

The following excerpt, Excerpt 7, illustrates how Isaac, Victor, and Aaron co-constructed their tasks related to writing their screenplay. This excerpt shows how the students helped each other jointly compose the text, especially when one of the members in the group did not know how to continue a sentence upon finding a lexis-related problem.

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<sup>16</sup> English

### Excerpt 7

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1	ISA	<i>Podemos deci:r (.) mm (0.3) podemos decir&gt;queremos reclamar nuestros derechos de trabajadores porque:&lt;(.) no nos pagan.</i> we can say: (.) mm (0.3) we can say>we want to demand our worker rights because< (.) we are not getting paid.
2	VIC	((nodding)) <i>vale.</i> ok.
3	ISA	Eh (.) we: (.) we want? ((looking at AAR and VIC))
4	AAR	To claim.
5	ISA	claim. ((writing it down and smiling))

---

The excerpt begins with Isaac suggesting an idea to his peers, in his L1, regarding what they could write next (Line 1). One of his peers, Victor, displays his approval by nodding and using an agreement token, “*vale*” (Line 2). Isaac then starts translating into English what he originally proposed in Spanish (Line 3). He starts the sentence and raises his intonation. Before completing the sentence, Isaac gazes at his peers to elicit their assistance in formulating the sentence he has suggested (we want?). Moreover, this rising intonation also indicates that Isaac is not certain of the English translation for the word “*reclamar*”, the next word that would follow in the sentence he is creating. Aaron responds to his peer’s call for help by continuing the sentence Isaac had started (Line 4). Furthermore, he provides Isaac with the word he did not seem to know (claim) to complete his sentence. In the next line (Line 5), it can be observed how Isaac repeats the word “claim” while he smiles and writes it down.

In all the excerpts analysed above, participants were able to achieve together a solution to the different lexis-related problems they encountered in their interactions; they found the word they needed to use in their writings. Nonetheless, two sequences (excerpt 8 and excerpt 9) in which participants were unable to collaboratively find a solution to their problems were found.

Excerpt 8 illustrates Maya, Lisa, Rob, Melisa, and Christina attempting to write one of their dialogue's sentences. Students wanted to write that the nun, the main character in theirs and the rest of group's screenplays, was looking for a rosary she had lost.

**Excerpt 8**

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1	MAY	<i>puedes decir que se te ha caído el rosario.</i> you can say that you have dropped your rosary.
2	MAY	it is just that [I've lost.=
3	LIS	<i>no:] Estoy buscando?</i> I'm searching.=((looking at MAY)) <i>no:] I'm looking for?</i>
4	MAY	=I'm looking for.
5	LIS	I'm looking for.
6	MAY	fo:r
7	ROB	my <i>rosario</i> . ((laughs))  rosary. ((laughs))
8	CHR	<u>my rosar</u> . ((trying to effect an English accent))  (2 lines omitted <sup>17</sup> )
9	ROB	<u>rosario</u> .  <u>rosary</u> .  (5 omitted lines <sup>18</sup> )
10	MAY	<i>el rosario?</i> ((asking the teacher))  the rosary? ((asking the teacher))
11	T	rosary?

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In the beginning of this excerpt, Maya suggests the content for the next sentence they need to write by announcing her idea in her L1 (Line 1). In line 2, she proceeds to formulate aloud her proposed sentence that expresses this idea. Maya

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<sup>17</sup> Students are engaged in off-task interaction.

<sup>18</sup> Students are engaged in off-task interaction.



uses the verb “lose”. In line 3, Lisa interrupts Maya, showing her disaffiliation with Maya’s contribution with a negative token, “no”, and suggests using an alternative sentence: “*estoy buscando*”. Lisa says “*estoy buscando*” in Spanish, with a rising intonation, and looking at Maya, which indicates an uncertainty about how to express this in English. However, immediately afterwards she offers a translation of her proposed line (I’m searching). In the following line (Line 4), an example of a recast<sup>19</sup> can be found: Maya corrects Lisa by repeating the structure of her sentence, but with an appropriate translation. However, she neither tells Lisa she was wrong nor provides an explanation regarding why it is better to use the verb “look for”. Lisa shows that she accepts her peer’s correction by repeating the sentence Maya has provided her (Line 5).

In line 6, Maya tries to continue constructing the sentence for their task, but she stops talking at the position where the word “rosary” might be used. Maya displays a potential unknowing stance regarding the English translation for this word by stretching the vowel sound in “for” and then pausing. Rob attempts to complete his classmate’s sentence humorously completing it with the word in Spanish (Line 7). Christina also tries to help by suggesting using an approximation<sup>20</sup> of the word (*rosar*) (Line 8). Finally, as students do not seem to deem any of the candidate versions of the word as being correct, they abandon their search and decide to ask the teacher for help (Line 10).

In the final extract presented in this section (Excerpt 9), students (Isaac, Aaron, and Victor) are discussing about what the corresponding English word to the Spanish word “*billetes*”<sup>21</sup> will be. They want to write in their screenplay that the nun bribes an inspector by offering him some money (notes). The participants suggest using up to five different words, all related to money: cash, dollars, pounds, bucket, and bill.

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<sup>19</sup>To provide a correction without directly indicating that the utterance produced was incorrect (i.e. reformulating the error)

<sup>20</sup>An invented word that sounds like an L2 word.

<sup>21</sup> Notes (money)

### Excerpt 9

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1	ISA	cash? (.) cash <i>es efectivo?</i> <u>cash</u> ? ((looking at AAR)) does “cash” mean  (3 lines omitted <sup>22</sup> )
2	AAR	cash (.) <u>sí</u> : ((looking at his phone)) <u>ye:s</u>
3	ISA	<i>mm pero pon billetes</i> (.) [ <u>billetes</u> . mm but write notes (.) [ <u>notes</u> .
4	AAR	<u>billetes?</u> ] <u>dollars</u> o:: ((looking at ISA)) <u>notes?</u> ] [...] o::r  (10 lines omitted <sup>23</sup> )
5	VIC	<u>pounds</u> (.) <u>pounds</u> .
6	AAR	pounds <i>son monedas</i> (.) means coins. (.)
7	AAR	<i>billetes</i> [ <i>me sale</i> tickets. notes [it says
8	VIC	<i>es</i> <u>bucket</u> ] (.) <i>pon</i> bucket. ((pointing at AAR’s phone))  it is [...] write
9	ISA	<i>busca</i> <u>BILL</u> (.) <i>busca</i> bill (.) <i>busca la traducción de</i> bill ((poiting at AAR’s phone)) look up <u>BILL</u> (.) look up <u>bill</u> (.) look for the translation of bill
10	VIC	b u (.) b u c k (.) <i>pon</i> <u>b u c k</u> . ((looking at AAR’s phone)) write
11	ISA	((looking at AAR’s phone))
12	DER	((looking at AAR’s phone))  (5 line omitted)
13	AAR	<u>dollar</u> .

---

Isaac begins this word-search sequence by directing a confirmation request to his peers regarding the meaning of the word “cash” in Spanish (*¿cash es efectivo?*

<sup>22</sup> Students are engaged in off-task interaction.

<sup>23</sup> The word-search continues; students discuss about the words they have proposed to use.

Line 1). He formulates this request as an interrogative structure with a final rising intonation. Aaron then responds to Isaac's request, by repeating the word "cash" with a downward intonation, and adds a positive token (yes) to confirm that Isaac's translation was appropriate; however, he takes out his phone and starts to search for words in an online dictionary (Line 2). In using his phone in this way, Aaron shows that the search for the word "cash" is not complete, or that he is not certain about his own response regarding the word in question.

Isaac requests Aaron to look up for the translation of the Spanish word "*billetes*" (Line 3). He initiates this directive with the conjunction, "but", which may indicate that Isaac is asking him to change the way that Aaron was carrying out the search. In line 4, Aaron has seemingly complied to Isaac's request and tells Isaac that the translation for the word "*billetes*" is "dollars". The other participants do not seem to accept any of the candidate words that Isaac and Aaron have proposed to use or that they have found in the dictionary, because they continue with the word-search sequence. In line 5, Victor suggests using an alternative candidate word: "pounds". Aaron explains to Victor, in his L1, that "pounds" means "*monedas*" in Spanish (Line 6). Victor and Isaac prolong the search for "*billetes*" by proposing two new candidate words ("bucket" and "bill") (Lines 8 and 9), and they ask Aaron to look them up in his online dictionary.

After a prolonged word-search process, the students ultimately decided to rephrase the sentence they were attempting to write, thereby avoiding the use of an unknown word (See Appendix 1). The final version of the sentence did not contain any of the words they had proposed to use; they used the word "money" instead: "the nun tries to bribe the inspector offering him some money".

Both excerpts 8 and 9 demonstrate unresolved problem-solving processes targeting lexis-related problems encountered while performing their task. None of the students in the group seemed to know the correct solution to the problem (i.e. the word they are looking for), and the problem was not solved, even as they displayed collaborative stances and actions towards trying to do so. These excerpts reveal the resources that participants used other than each other: they

asked the teacher for help, and used a phone to search for the word they were looking for in an online dictionary. Furthermore, the final written screenplay version that students handed in shows that another resource students used when encountering a lexis-related problem was circumvention of the word in question by rephrasing the sentence. In addition, the first lines in excerpt 8 (Lines 1-5) demonstrate students working in groups also provided themselves with feedback and corrections.

## 5.2. Grammar

In this section, various episodes in which participants interact to solve some grammar-related problems that arise while performing the task will be presented and analysed. All, but the last excerpt, are taken from the conversations among David, Anna, Eva and Karl (4<sup>th</sup> year *ESO* group 2) while they wrote their screenplay. The last excerpt involves Christina, Rob, Melisa, Maya, and Lisa working (4<sup>th</sup> year *ESO* group 1).

### *Excerpt 10*

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1	DAV	and you <u>sho:wed</u> ((looking at ANN and EVA)) (.) [no.
2	ANN	<i>sí</i> ] (.) you <u>had shown</u> (.) <u>me</u> yes
3	ANN	((writing))
4	DAV	((nodding))  (4 omitted lines <sup>24</sup> )
5	DAV	((looking at what ANN is writing down)) <i>seria <u>have</u>, no?</i> it would be “ <u>have</u> ”, wouldn’t it?
6	ANN	<i>no&gt; <u>had had</u>&lt;(.) <u>has demostrado en pla:n</u> you had shown.</i> <i>no [...] (.)you have shown li:ke</i>

---

This first excerpt (excerpt 10) shows a sequence that is initiated with David formulating the sentence they should write next in their dialogue (Line 1). In David’s sentence the verb is in the past simple (showed). Anna responds to

<sup>24</sup> While Anna is writing, Karl is talking and laughing.

David's production by using a positive token, "yes", but then she pauses and repeats David's sentence changing the verb to the past perfect tense (had shown, Line 2). This is an example of a recast: Anna attempts to correct David, but she does not explicitly tell him he was wrong or explain why she believes what he said was incorrect. David initially seems to accept his peer's correction because he nods his head (Line 4). Nonetheless, in line 5, it can be observed that David, who is reading what Anna is writing down in the paper (i.e. "you had shown"), remains uncertain about the verb tense Anna has proposed using. David deploys an information request regarding her choice of tense (*seria have, ¿no?* Line 5). With this negative interrogative structure David is shown questioning the use of "have" instead of "had", i.e. to put the verb in present perfect instead of past perfect. Anna indicates that she does not accept David's alternative version as she begins her turn with a negative token, "no" (Line 6), she repeats her own candidate formulation twice, and does not change what she has written on the paper. Moreover, Anna tries to explain to David, by translating the verb into Spanish, why they should use "had" and not "have" in this case. Even though Anna contradicts herself when she translates the verb (*tú has demostrado* should be translated as *you have shown*) she does not seem to realize this, and she maintains her use of the past perfect in the text that they are composing.

Excerpt 10 demonstrates that despite the collaborative efforts observed among students when carrying out group work tasks, their negotiation activity, aimed at resolving grammatical issues, does not always result in accurately formulated solutions. Furthermore, it can be seen that when encountering a grammar-related problem students tended to use their L1 to provide their peers with an explanation of why one option should be used over another.

In contrast, the following excerpt (excerpt 11) demonstrates how interactants (Anna, David, and Karl) jointly find an accurately formulated solution to a different grammar-related problem they encountered while writing.

### *Excerpt 11*

---

1	ANN	you wouldn't (.) you wouldn't (.) <u>HAD</u> =
2	DAV	= <u>no</u> . <u>no</u> .
3	ANN	you wouldn't (.) <u>have</u> ?
4	KAR	helped.
5	DAV	[ <i>vale</i> . [ok.
6	KAR	sí] <u>helped</u> . yes]
7	ANN	((writing)) you wouldn't (0.2) <u>QUEDA FEO</u> . (.) <you wouldn't <u>had</u> .> <u>IT IS WEIRD</u> .
8	DAV	<u>have have</u> (.) <i>porque es el °XXX°</i> . because it is the °XXX°.

---

This sequence begins with Anna attempting to construct a sentence for their task. Anna proposes the use of the verb “had” in this sentence (Line 1). Immediately following her turn, David responds by saying “no” to indicate that he does not accept what she said as correct, but he does not provide her with another form of the verb (Line 2). This may mean that David is allowing Anna to reflect and find the correct form by herself. Then, in line 3, Anna utters the sentence again, but using the verb “have” this time and raising her intonation. This rising intonation is the resource Anna uses to ask her peers whether the verb she just said is the one they should use or not. Both Karl and David respond to Anna’s question, indicating that she has used the correct verb: Karl utters the verb that directly follows Anna’s phrase, thereby continuing the construction of her sentence (helped, Line 4), and David says “*vale*” (Line 5), which displays his acceptance of the sentence so far. Nevertheless, it can be observed that, when Anna starts to write the sentence that they have created together (with the verb “have”), she questions the formulation by exclaiming that it does not sound appropriate to her (*queda feo*, Line 7). After a short pause, Anna repeats the sentence changing the verb again and using the verb she had originally proposed to use before (had).

Moreover, Anna raises her volume when she delivers this assessment to emphasize her stance regarding the accurate use of the verb and to make her peers realize she has changed it back to her version. Finally, David corrects Anna again (*have, have*), and follows his correction with an explanation attempt, which is inaudible to the camera (Line 8).

Some other sequences in which participants provided their peers with mini-grammar lessons were found. This pattern can be observed in the following two excerpts (excerpts 12 and 13).

### *Excerpt 12*

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1	EVA	((pointing at the paper)) <i>es want o wants?</i> is it “want” or “wants”?
2	ANN	<u>want</u> <i>no?</i> ((looking at her classmates)) right?
3	EVA	((frowning))
4	DAV	<i>sí porque está el <u>would</u>.</i> yes because we have “ <u>would</u> ” here.
5	EVA	<i>es verdad.</i> ((nodding)) it is true.

---

In excerpt 12, Eva is reading what her classmate (Anna) is writing down on the paper (i.e. who would want to...). Eva is not sure whether they should add the –s of the third person singular to “want” or not. Then, she deploys an information request, while pointing at the paper (*¿es want o wants?* Line 1), which constrains Anna’s answer to one of the two versions she has mentioned. Anna answers Eva’s question with the first option Eva has offered, and uses a tag question as a form of confirmation request (*want, ¿no?* Line 2). The recipient of this confirmation request Anna poses is not just Eva, but all the members in the group, since she turns her gaze to her peers as she poses it. Then, in line 4, David provides Eva with an explanation of why the addition of –s in the word “want” would not be considered appropriate (*sí, porque está el would*). Eva accepts David’s

explanation as shown by her vocal response, “*es verdad*” (line 5), thereby ratifying his explanation, and her embodied action of nodding.

***Excerpt 13***

---

1	DAV	why you do::n’t ((shaking his head meaning no))
2	DAV	(.) why you didn’t [ <u>told me</u> (.)
3	ANN	((writing while reading what she is writing)) why:]
4	DAV	°tell me°
5	EVA	<u>es told</u> (.) <i>por qué no me lo habías dicho?</i> <u>it is told</u> (.) why you didn’t tell me?
6	DAV	<i>pero está el</i> didn’t. but we have “didn’t” here.
7	EVA	A::h (.) <i>crack</i> . ((touching DAV’s arm like congratulating him and smiling)) champion.

---

In the beginning of this stretch of interaction, excerpt 13, David is formulating aloud the question they are going to use next in their dialogue (Line 1). He starts constructing the question using the present simple (“why you don’t”), but he soon pauses and shakes his head to show his rejection of this version. In line 2 David reformulates the question marking the verb in past tense this time (Line 2). However, he uses the auxiliary verb “didn’t”, followed by the past participle form of “told”. David pauses again, and then self-corrects by saying “tell me” (Line 4). In line 5, Eva declares that the appropriate verb form in question should be “told”. Moreover, after a short pause, Eva translates the same question into her L1 (*¿por qué no me lo habías dicho?*). Eva uses her L1 here as a tool to help David understand why they should use “told” and not “tell”. In line 6, David seems to assume the expert or teacher’s identity and replies to Eva’s suggestion by explaining, in his L1, why “told” there is not an accurate form in this context (*pero está el* didn’t).

At the end of the excerpt it can be observed that Eva has understood and accepted her peer’s explanation, because she responds to David with a lengthened “ah”



sound (a::h) (Line 7), or a change of state token. Moreover, Eva provides David with verbal and non-verbal feedback, or an assessment of his performance: she congratulates her classmate by calling him “*crack*” and smiling at him while touching his arm (See figure 3).



Figure 3. Eva provides David with non-verbal feedback.  
From right to left: Anna, Eva, David, and Karl.

Excerpt 12 and 13 demonstrate that students are able to provide their peers with accurate grammar explanations. Furthermore, excerpt 13 has also shown that while carrying out the task, participants offer, in some occasions, each other feedback on their productions and contributions to the task.

The following excerpt shows how Eva, David, Anna, and Karl interact to construct a question that they want the queen<sup>25</sup>, a character in their screenplay, to ask the nun, the screenplays' main character. The question they attempt to write is: “who would want to kill my husband?”

#### ***Excerpt 14***

1	DAV	who wou:ld? (.) <u>want</u> (.)
2	ANN	((writing))
3	DAV	<u>quién querría</u> . ((looking at ANN)) <u>who would want</u> . ((looking at ANN))
4	ANN	((shaking her head to show disagreement)) <i>pero eso está mal dicho [no?</i> but it is wrong [isn't it?

<sup>25</sup> Eva, Anna, David, and Karl were writing a screenplay set on Henry VIII times. So, the main characters in their screenplay were: Henry VIII (the king), his wife (the queen), and a nun.

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5	DAV	<i>sí ]querría creo que es</i> who (.) would (.) [ <i>osea</i> = yes ] I think ] would like is who (.) would (.) [I mean=
6	KAR	= <i>sí</i> ] (.) <u>who</u> (.) <u>would</u> (.) <u>want</u> (.) to hurt my husband. =yes ]
7	DAV	<i>querría es</i> <u>would</u> [ <u>want</u> . “would want” is
8	KAR	<u>to hurt</u> (.) <u>my husband</u> .]  ((2 lines omitted <sup>26</sup> ))
9	DAV	((while reading what ANN is writing down)) <i>no</i> (.) who would want (.) <u>kill</u> (.) No
10	DAV	<i>pero sin el</i> “to” eh? ((Looking at ANN)) without “to” eh?
11	ANN	((shaking her head meaning no))
12	DAV	((frowning))
13	KAR	<i>sí</i> (.) <i>sí es el</i> to (0.2) <i>hombre</i> (.) she wants kill (.) <i>ella quiere</i> <i>matar</i> (.) <i>a:: tu esposo</i> (.) <i>ella quiere matar a tu esposo</i> yes (.) yes with “to” (0.2) she wants kill (.) <u>she wants to kill</u> (.) <u>you::r husband</u> (.) <u>she want to kill your husband</u>

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The excerpt begins with David composing the question (who would want) (Line 1). David then uses his L1 to translate what he has just said (*quién querría*) (Line 3). Here, David uses translation as a resource to explain to his peers that what he just said means exactly the same as what they wanted to express.

In line 4, it can be seen how Anna articulates her understanding that the sentence David has produced is incorrect (*pero eso está mal dicho*). In the lines that follow, lines 5 and 7, David uses his L1 again to translate the verb, in order for Anna to understand why “would want” is not incorrect (*querría es* would want). However, what David is doing here is merely translating the verb, but he is not providing Anna with any grammatical explanation on why “would want” is correct in that sentence.

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<sup>26</sup> Karl keeps suggesting using “my husband” and Anna asks him to wait

This same pattern is repeated in lines 9, 10 and 13. In line 10, David, who is reading what Anna is writing on the paper (i.e. “who would want to kill my husband?”), tells Anna she should not use “to” in her written question (*pero sin el “to”, eh!*). Karl refutes David’s assertion that the word “to” should be omitted in the sentence formulation. Karl then translates the question into Spanish, repeating it twice. However, Karl’s translation does not provide information to explain why leaving out the preposition “to” is not acceptable.

The final excerpt of this section, excerpt 15, shows Maya, Lisa, Rob, Christina, and Melisa (4<sup>th</sup> year *ESO* group 1) working on their screenplay. Maya, who has adopted the writer’s role, is trying to write down a sentence. However, she cannot finish the sentences because she does not remember the past form of the verb “hide”.

### ***Excerpt 15***

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1	MAY	((trying to write the verb down)) <i>cuál es el pasado de hide?</i> ((looking at LIS)) which is the past form of “hide”?  (10 lines omitted <sup>27</sup> )
2	MAY	hidden ((laughs)) (2s)
3	MAY	[ <u>a ver</u> (.) <i>atención a la frase.</i> <u>let’s see</u> (.) pay attention to the sentence.
4	LIS	<i>no creo que sea hidden eh</i> ] [(.) <i>porque si es <u>hidden</u> el último.</i> I don’t think it is hidden eh(.) if the last one is <u>hidden</u> .  (4 omitted lines)
5	ROB	<i>No es así (.) no es así (.) eh</i> ] [(.) <i>creo (.) no (.) es con una d.</i> It is not like this (.) it is not like this (.) eh (.) I think (.) no (.) it is written with a d.
6	MEL	<u>el qué?</u> <u>what?</u>
7	MAY	<u>Hid?</u> =

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<sup>27</sup>Students are engaged in off-task interaction.

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8	ROB	<i>=creo que es [hid.</i> I think it is “hid”.
9	MEL	<i>el qué?] qué estáis diciendo? YO (.) YO (.) YO (.)</i> <i>what? What are you talking about? ME(.)ME(.)ME</i>
10	MAY	<i>el pasado de esconderse.</i> the past form of “hide”  (25 omitted lines <sup>28</sup> )
11	ROB	<i>=puedo utilizar el móvil para buscar una cosa? ((asking the</i> teacher)) <i>=can I use my phone to look something up?</i>
12	MEL	<i>bueno (.) que nos lo diga ella. <u>hide</u>.</i> well (.) she can tell us.  (4omitted lines <sup>29</sup> )
13	ROB	<i>es <u>hid</u> ((looking at his phone)) (.) es <u>hid</u>.</i> it is “hid” it is “hid”

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In line 1, it can be observed how Maya attempts to search for the past form of the verb “hide”. Maya directly asks: *¿cuáles el pasado de “hide”?* The recipient of this question is Lisa, which is indexed by Maya’s gaze directed at her while she is posing it. In line 2, Maya suggests using “hidden”, but she laughs, which may indicate that she is not certain that the past form of “hide” is not “hidden”. After a pause of two seconds, Lisa tries to explain to Maya that the verb they are looking for cannot be “hidden” (*porque si es “hidden” el último*, Line 4), because “hidden” is the past participle form of the verb “hide”, or as LIS calls it, the verb in the third column of the irregular verbs’ list (*el último*). At the same time Maya invites her peers to help Lisa and her by saying: *“a ver, atención a la frase”* (Line 3). Rob is the only one in the group who responds to this call for help (Line 5): Melisa and Christina are engaged in off-task activity (omitted lines). Rob suggests that the past form of “hide” is “hid”.

In lines 6 and 9, it can be observed how Melisa tries to enter the conversation between Rob and Maya by asking them what they are talking about. Furthermore,

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<sup>28</sup> Students continue with their discussion.

<sup>29</sup> Maya and the teacher are talking while Rob is looking up the word in the online dictionary.

in line 9, Melisa shows her desire to participate in the discussion, because she shouts “yo, yo, yo”, in an effort to take the floor. Finally, Maya allows her classmate to take part in the discussion by describing their activity: they were looking for the past form of the verb “hide” (*el pasado de esconderse*, Line 10).

At the end of the excerpt, as students do not seem to arrive at an agreement, Rob asks permission to the teacher to look up the verb on his phone (Line 11), and Melisa proposes eliciting help from the teacher (Line 13). Finally, Rob finds the correct form of the verb by means of a search on the phone before the teacher answers Melisa’s question.

Excerpt 15 shows that students’ interaction did not result in solutions for all the grammar-related problems they encountered while writing their screenplays. The extract reveals how, despite the fact that one member in the group (Rob) seems to know a linguistically accurate solution to their problem, the students’ inability to come to an agreement lead to their use of other resources outside of their group. The resources students used were: asking the teacher for help or searching for the solution on their phone.

## **6. Discussion**

The findings of this in-depth analysis, suggest that, as Danli (2011) and Fernández Dobao (2010) have asserted, collaborative writing tasks lead students to discuss lexis and grammar-related issues that emerge throughout this classroom activity.

As it could be observed in the analysis, interactions occasioned by both lexis and grammar-based sources of trouble identified by students followed the same order. Such sequences opened by one or more members in the group who encountered a lexis or grammar-related problem (e.g. they missed a word; they did not know the verb tense they had to use, etc.). Then, as the problem was identified, students engaged in problem-solving activity to resolve it. Finally, after negotiating and discussing possible solutions to the problem, students articulated and jointly achieved with an agreed-upon solution. Nevertheless, the analysis showed how, in

some occasions, the lack of knowledge displayed by all the group members or their inability to come to an agreement created some obstacles to finding a solution to their problem.

One of the aims of the present study was to examine the resources students used to manage interaction, and solve the lexis and grammar-related problems they encountered when carrying out the collaborative writing task. The analysis showed that students used different resources to facilitate communication, such as: clarification requests (e.g. asking “what do you want to mean?”, or using facial expressions to mean that they needed clarification) or comprehension checks (e.g. *¿sabes*<sup>30</sup>?). Moreover, it could also be observed that in encountering a lexis or grammar-related problem participants directly and indirectly recruited their peers’ help. Whereas in some occasions students employed requests for information formulated with interrogative structures, or direct questions (e.g. how do you say “a word” in English?), in others they used more indirect forms to recruit assistance from their peers, such as: raising their intonation, lengthening the vowel sounds, turning their gaze to their peers, using multi-modal actions (e.g. hand gestures), etc. When one or more members in the group responded to their peers’ call for help, the negotiation process was initiated. During the negotiation process students were found to: defend their position (e.g. explain why they should use their candidate word in the text); correct each other’s language-related mistakes (e.g. recast); provide each other with feedback on their contributions to the task; and even, instruct their peers on lexis and grammar.

The analysis also focused on the interactional resources students used to express agreement or disagreement with their peers’ suggestions. It was found that students did this both verbally (e.g. *vale*<sup>31</sup>, *es verdad*<sup>32</sup>, *sí*<sup>33</sup>, *no*<sup>34</sup>, etc.); and nonverbally (e.g. frowning, looking at each other, etc.). Furthermore, in some cases, students were found to make their agreement visible by writing their peers’ suggestions down without saying or doing anything else.

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<sup>30</sup> Do you understand what I mean?

<sup>31</sup> Ok.

<sup>32</sup> It is true.

<sup>33</sup> Yes.

<sup>34</sup> No.

As in the studies by Guerrero and Villamil (2000), Hellermann and Pekarek (2010), and Seedhouse (2004), the analysis in the present study also showed that, during interaction, students recurrently and strategically used their L1, especially when they had to defend their position or provide their peers with lexis and grammar explanations. As it could be observed in the analysis, students used their L1 to make themselves understood, to explain their peers the meaning of some words, and to compare L1 and L2 grammatical structures.

Nonetheless, as mentioned above, the analysis showed that students were not able to find solutions to all the lexis and grammar-related problems they encountered while performing their tasks. In these cases the participants were observed avoiding the problem (e.g. using a different word with similar meaning or a different structure), looking up the word or structure on their phone, or asking the teacher.

This study also aimed at exploring the lexis and grammar learning opportunities that are made available to students while working in collaborative writing tasks. The analysis showed that the collaborative task in this study led students to reflect and discuss lexis and grammar that were made relevant over the course of their interaction. When students came upon a lexis or grammar-related problem, they interacted, using all the above-mentioned resources, to collaboratively solve it. Moreover, it could also be observed the means by which students provided their peers with explanations on their lexis and grammar questions. Thus, it could be said that collaborative writing tasks, and the meta-talk they generate, create opportunities for students to learn from each other about lexis and grammar-related issues. In addition, it could also be concluded that such interactional contexts allow students to co-construct answers to their questions about lexis and grammar in a way that they could not when working individually. However, this study cannot empathically ensure that participants acquired all the words or grammar structures they discussed over the course of interaction. In order to be able to verify if students had acquired these structures, a different type of study focusing on learning outcomes would be required, such as a study design involving a post-test.

Therefore, as was found in previous research studies on second language learning, such as the ones carried out by Fernández Dobao (2010), Guerrero & Villamil (2000), Li (2013), Mondada & Pekarek (2004), Pekarek (2002), and Reichert & Liebscher (2012), this study also showed that talk-in-interactions in collaborative tasks can afford opportunities for students to develop their linguistic competence. Nonetheless, the exact impact that participants in the study had on each other's interlanguage cannot be confirmed by these findings.

The analysis in the present study also revealed that, as Donato (1994) stated, while working in groups students interacted to construct collective products (i.e. to collaboratively write their text). Through focused, goal-driven interaction students seemed to have produced more accurate texts in terms of lexis and grammar than what they could have produced by writing them individually. Furthermore, by working in groups, students were seen to solve the questions about lexis and grammar that they identified during the task completion. This appears to confirm Vygotsky's (trans. 1978) suggestion that, through engaging in social interactions students can reach higher levels of performance.

Finally, the results of the data analysis of the present study in regards to interactional resources employed by students over the course of the lexis and grammar-based problem-solving activities were similar to the ones reported by Danli (2011). However, the present study also showed that students' non-verbal language is also relevant in the type of interaction. Moreover, the resources students used to express agreement and disagreement were also explored.

## **7. Conclusion**

Based on the results of the data analysis presented in this dissertation, it could be concluded that current teaching methodologies used in foreign language classes should continue to develop in the direction towards which they are aiming. It is recommended that learning be understood as a process of socialization and interaction, and not as an individual process of memorizing information. Moreover, this approach to learning foments in learners further development of



their L2 communicative and interactive skills. Foreign language classes should continue to shift their focus of attention from the teacher to the students. Consequently, foreign language teachers should be encouraged to promote the use of collaborative tasks in their classes, since these are tasks that have been shown to promote greater student-to-student interaction, and hence, create opportunities for students to learn from each other.

This paper also conveys other aspects foreign language teachers should be aware of and take into account when preparing and giving their classes. First, foreign language teachers should not treat their learners as mere information recipients. As the present study has shown, during collaborative tasks learners themselves can provide their peers with new information and knowledge that may not develop in other types of classroom activities. Thus, it is important for foreign language teachers to consider their students as information providers also.

Secondly, it is important for foreign language teachers to know that, despite the reported benefits of student-centred classes, where students are given the opportunity to interact and collaborate, students may need their assistance while they engage in collaborative activities. Participants, in this study, for instance, were found to ask the teacher for help when they were not able to solve some of their language-related questions together. This study shows that during tasks that involve pair or group work, teachers should be moving around the room and monitor their students' progress in case they need assistance.

Finally, another important aspect that foreign language teachers should take into account when asking their students to perform non-oral collaborative tasks (e.g. writing or reading tasks) in pairs or groups is that they should not discourage their students from using their L1. As this and other studies on second language learning have stated (Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Hellermann & Pekarek, 2010; Seedhouse 2004), the L1 is a powerful tool students strategically use to interact and collaboratively solve the task they were asked to perform. Moreover, this study has also displayed that by using their L1 students were able to teach and learn from each other, in this case, about lexis and grammar-related issues.

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## **9.Appendix**

### **1. Example of students' production**

#### **Industrial Revolution Play**

##### ***Characters***

*Sister Madeleine – Tom*

*Inspector Javert– Derek*

*Lawyer Nicolas – Aaron*

*Worker 1 – Isaac*

*Worker 2 – Hector*

*Worker 3 – Victor*

##### ***Scene 1***

*Sister Madeleine is in her office and like every last Friday of the month she's announcing through her microphone the wage of the workers.*

*Sister Madeleine:* Hello workers! Unfortunately, I can't pay you this month, but do not worry brothers and sisters, God will reward you for your efforts.

*In the factory workers are arguing after finding out they are not going to get paid.*

*Worker 1.* That's not fair, God can't feed our families.

*Worker 3.* She doesn't pay me because I'm black.

*Worker 2.* What are you saying? You are German.

*Worker 3 .* But my skin is black because of the coal mines.

*Worker 1.* Stop shouting! We need to claim together for our salaries!

*Worker 2.* Let's call the lawyer, he will help us.

## **Scene 2.**

*Worker 2 calls a Lawyer with a phone:*

*Worker 2.* Hello! Am I talking with a lawyer?

*Lawyer Nicolas:* Yes, you are talking with the best lawyer in the city.

*Worker 2.* Oh nice! That's what we were looking for.

*Lawyer Nicolas:* Well, how may I help you?

*Worker 2.* We want to sue our boss, she is not paying us; she owes us three months' salaries already.

*Lawyer Nicolas.* Oh no, this is horrible! So, the best way to solve your problem is calling an inspector.

*Inspector Javert arrives to the factory and goes into Sister Madeleine's office.*

*Inspector Javert.* Hello, I'm Javert, Inspector Javert, and I'm here to look into the conditions of your workers. Let me see their documents, please.

*Sister Madeleine.* Ok, no problem, take them!

*The nun tries to bribe the inspector offering him some money. The Inspector takes the workers' documents and the money and leaves the office.*

## **Scene 3.**

**The Lawyer sets an appointment with the workers, the Inspector and the nun at the factory.**

*Lawyer Nicolas.* Come on Sr Javert, tell me what did you find out by looking into the workers' documents?

*Inspector Javert.* You shouldn't be worried, everything is alright!

*Worker 1.* Don't believe him! He is lying! Look at the documents!

*The Lawyer takes the documents and finds out that the workers didn't get paid for a few months. The Lawyer gets angry, and in a fit of rage, he pushes Javert, who stumbles and immediately falls over Sister Madeleine, who unfortunately falls inside an industrial machine that catches her left arm. Very frightened, Inspector Javert runs away quickly to call the police.*

### **Epilogue.**

*Finally, everyone was imprisoned. The British police investigated the case and arrested Sister Madeleine for not paying her workers, and Inspector Javert for accepting the nun's bribery. The workers were also put into prison because they couldn't pay the lawyer. And, the lawyer was put into prison after attacking Inspector Javert.*

***THE END***

## 2. Jeffersonian Transcript Notation

MAY	Maya: Student 1 (4 <sup>th</sup> year <i>ESO</i> group 1)
MEL	Melisa: Student 2 (4 <sup>th</sup> year <i>ESO</i> group 1)
LIS	Lisa: Student 3 (4 <sup>th</sup> year <i>ESO</i> group 1)
CHR	Christina: Student 4 (4 <sup>th</sup> year <i>ESO</i> group 1)
ROB	Rob: Student 5 (4 <sup>th</sup> year <i>ESO</i> group 1)
DAV	David: Student 6 (4 <sup>th</sup> year <i>ESO</i> group 2)
KAR	Karl: Student 7 (4 <sup>th</sup> year <i>ESO</i> group 2)
ANN	Anna: Student 8 (4 <sup>th</sup> year <i>ESO</i> group 2)
EVA	Eva: Student 9 (4 <sup>th</sup> year <i>ESO</i> group 2)
ISA	Isaac: Student 10 (1 <sup>st</sup> year of Batxillerat)
TOM	Tom: Student 11 (1 <sup>st</sup> year of Batxillerat)
HEC	Hector: Student 12 (1 <sup>st</sup> year of Batxillerat)
VIC	Victor: Student 13 (1 <sup>st</sup> year of Batxillerat)
AAR	Aaron: Student 14 (1 <sup>st</sup> year of Batxillerat)
DER	Derek: Student 15 (1 <sup>st</sup> year of Batxillerat)
T	Teacher
(X omitted lines)	Students continue talking, especially about topic that are not related to the task
?	Raising intonation at the end of a turn
.	Falling intonation at the end of a turn
(.)	Micropause/Brief pause
(#of seconds)	Timed pause



=	Latching speech
[text]	Start and end point of overlapping speech
<u>Underlined text</u>	Emphasized or stressed speech
<b>Capitalized text</b>	Increased volume speech
° text °	Reduced volume speech
:	Prolongation of vowel sounds
::	Longer prolongation of vowel sounds
((text))	Non-verbal activities
XXX	Speech which is unclear or in doubt in the transcript
<text>	The enclosed speech was delivered more slowly than usual for speaker
>text<	The speech was delivered faster than usual for speaker